

***Same Mission, Different Public: The Relationship Between Libraries & Their Communities***

**An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

Why do we still need libraries? Surely everyone gets their information through search engines and social media. If people are self-educated, what is the purpose of having institutions of public education like libraries or museums? These questions assume that Google and Twitter have completely equalized the playing field of information, and libraries are a redundant luxury. In some ways, this is actually true. But this school of thought comes from a place of privilege and assumes that everyone has digital access. It also does not account for all the other ways that libraries serve the public, which I examine thoroughly in my research.

Libraries also have a unique sense of community. Ever since they began, libraries have been adapting to the specific communities they serve. They have become so incredibly in tune with what their patrons need that no two libraries look the same. When the library is fulfilling the specific needs of their customers, this creates an impactful relationship between the library and its community.

In order to see how libraries connect with and impact their communities, I have interviewed staff members at six different libraries around North America, serving communities in: Anapra, Mexico, Belle Plaine, Iowa, Kansas City, Missouri, Muncie, Indiana, and Queens, New York. I asked them about what resources they have, what their demographic looks like, what funding they receive, and what sort of impact they thought their library made on the community. This is all to examine the effectiveness of the relationship of the library and its patrons as well as the culture that this relationship manifests.

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## Process Analysis

As someone who is planning on pursuing a career in library science, I took my thesis as an opportunity to learn more about the field I am about to enter. As I began researching and applying to graduate schools, I knew I wanted to work on a project that would allow me to talk to real librarians and help me learn more about the culture and profession. I wanted to hone in on an aspect of the job that excited me and attracted me to it in the first place.

I started considering a profession as a librarian as I watched the crisis in Ferguson, Missouri. I watched the way that the library was a safe haven for children after school in a time of insecurity, fear, and need. This was the first time I realized that a library was much more than a place with free books. The library really considered the culture of its community and what it needed. A few years later, I went to visit University of Michigan to look at their graduate program. While in Ann Arbor, I visited their public library and was shocked to see all the different things their patrons could check out. They had digital equipment, artwork, and many more non-traditional materials. I began asking myself why Ann Arbor had these things at their library, while it seemed as if some libraries only had books and programming. What about Ann Arbor's community made this possible? Why did their community have a need for these things? After remembering that first initial spark of what drew me to the job, and the visit to the Ann Arbor library, a thesis about how libraries pay attention to and nurture their communities was born naturally. After asking myself a few central questions about what I wanted my thesis to be, I felt like a research paper that included interviews was the format that I wanted to use to present my information.

After the IRB exempted me, I began curating interviews from around the country. I knew I wanted the scope of public libraries to be large. I reached out to libraries that I have a deep



personal connection with, such as all the libraries in the Kansas City area, Muncie, and Pan De Libros. Kansas City is my hometown, and so all the public libraries in the area are libraries that I grew up. I'm pursuing an undergraduate degree from Ball State University, in Muncie, Indiana, so I thought it would be interesting to examine the public library that serves the local community rather than the campus. Even though Pan De Libros is in Mexico, my church has a relationship with the librarian there, and I thought that it would fit perfectly as an example in my thesis. From there, I began to branch out to more extreme examples. A former supervisor connected me with his local librarian in his small hometown in Belle Plain, Iowa. I contacted Queens Library in New York City, because I had heard wonderful things about their services for immigrants. For most of these libraries, I went to the website and contacted them through the online customer support page. Each library was incredibly quick to get back to me, to connect me with who I needed to talk to, and was very eager to talk to me. I was nervous about this part of my thesis, but every librarian was excited to share their love of the library that I came away from almost every interview feeling affirmed and excited about my future profession.

After a few weeks of interviews, I collected all my raw data and shaped it into a paper. This part was daunting, because every librarian gave me about 2,000 words worth of interview notes. When I sat down with it, I felt like I was deconstructing and putting a huge complicated puzzle back together. Even though it was overwhelming at first, I found that it was actually kind of fun to create and organize the meaty part of my paper.

After this, the editing process began. My thesis advisor and I went from meeting once every two weeks, to meeting twice a week to go over my progress. My written thesis became completed around mid-April of my final semester of my graduate degree.



I feel like I have learned a lot about myself during this process, because I have never approached a project that took me nearly two semesters to complete. I learned the importance of setting deadlines for myself, and the ways that I prefer to work. I also think that it really affirmed that I'm going into the right profession and field, because even though this paper has taken a lot of time and energy, I have remained fascinated by the subject. Even now, I feel as if I could have gone deeper, and probably would have if time had allowed me.

Every interview was an enthusiastic conversation. It was really exciting to see that librarians are still passionate about their jobs. It seems like everyone is skeptical that I will have support and opportunities after I get my degree in library science, but speaking with real librarians gave me a positive glimpse into my future. This thesis made me feel like I learned so much, but I still have so much more to learn, which I feel like puts me in a ideal, wonderful place to be at right before I begin a graduate program.

I think that this thesis matters because in the coming years, libraries are going to be more important than ever. With a political administration that is trying to convince everyone that we are living a "post-truth" society, libraries and librarians are going to be crucial when it comes to resolving what resources are true and worthwhile. I have seen a lot of librarians band together over recent weeks, after President Trump proposed a budget that would be detrimental to federal funding for libraries and museums. This proves that he does not value, or is even maybe afraid, of the services libraries can provide. I hope my thesis can point out reasons that libraries must continue to stay open, and that librarians must continue to be willing to be public servants for the greater good. I also hope it can shed light on the ways libraries are adapting, getting stronger in order to serve the public, and keeping its position as one of the most important institutions in the world.



## Same Mission, Different Public: A Relationship Between A Library and Its Community

When I tell people that I'm about to extend my education to a library science and information studies degree, I usually get two different responses. People tell me that their dearly departed grandmother used to be a dedicated librarian, or they ask me if libraries are even going to exist by the time I finish my degree.

It would seem that the public perceives libraries are dying. If the heart of the library is free and fair access to information, has that role been filled by computers and Google?

Libraries and their patrons know this isn't true. Rather than dying, libraries are rapidly changing. Public libraries, specifically, have a much different role than they did in the past. We are living in an age that is so saturated by information via search engines, our smart phones, our social media and news outlets, but we are still confused about how to handle the deluge of the speed and quality of that information. While the rest of the world has slammed the gas pedal when it comes to information, libraries are attempting to pump the brakes and pay attention to the people who have been left behind.

What about the people who don't have computers or Internet access in their homes? What about people that are homeless? What about those who can't find resources or books in their first language or children that need supplemental education? Libraries are attempting to reach across the divide and equalize the playing field.

These are just conversations and observations I've made in my own life. The Pew Research Center did a country-wide survey about the attitude Americans have about public libraries, and the outlook is actually pretty positive. In their 2016 report, they wrote, "A majority of Americans feel libraries are doing a good job of providing a safe place for people to hang out or spend time (69% feel libraries contribute "a lot" to their communities in this regard)." The

Pew Research Center also found that a majority of people think the library opens up educational opportunities for people of all ages, about half think that it promotes creativity among young people, and almost half think libraries are a source through which people can learn about new technology.

The Pew Research Center also concluded that in recent years, libraries have played a huge role in helping people get information they feel they can trust to be true. From 2015, the percentage of people that felt this increased from 24% to 37%.

Each library and librarian across the country is keeping a close eye on the specific needs and characteristics of the different communities they serve. When examining a library, the relationship between the resources and the patrons is apparent. This paper will examine resources and programming that libraries offer to patrons, how libraries are funded and using their budgets, and the ways that library resources have had an impact on communities and individual lives. I am seeking to prove that when libraries adapt to their communities, the community benefits from it.

## **1. Methods**

I interviewed librarians from six different libraries in North America, asking them questions about their resources, populations, financing, and community impact. I interviewed Belle Plaine through email, visited the Maring-Hunt building in the Muncie Public Library system for an in-person interview, and for Pan De Libros, Mid-Continent Public Library, Kansas City Public Library, and Queens Library, I conducted the interviews over the phone.

## **2. Resources Offered**



As the research that I conducted will examine, the Pew Research Center noticed that people still come to the library for “traditional” reasons such as borrowing printed books (64% of library visitors) and sitting at the library to read or study (49% of library visitors). There are a growing number of people that come to the library to use the tech resources. In the 2016 study, the Pew Research center said:

29% of library-using Americans 16 and older said they had gone to libraries to use computers, the Internet, or a public Wi-Fi network. Library computer user figures are essentially the same as in 2015. In this context, it is worth noting that 7% of all Americans age 16 and older have used libraries’ Wi-Fi signals outside when libraries are closed.

If those American teenagers are using the Wi-Fi signals even if the library is closed, that must mean that the library’s Internet is their main source to work on their online homework.

Before I can talk about the impact libraries create around North America, it’s important to examine the different resources that different libraries offer. Resources are not just limited to books and written literature. Libraries offer resources that are within the space of the library, such as programming. Maker spaces, multi-purpose areas that are designed to generate creativity and space to work on different kinds of projects, are also on the rise. Another trend that has been occurring is lending out hard copy materials that aren’t just books, like works of art and technological devices. When deciding what resources the library is going to offer, the library must know what the community needs. This varies depending on what specific community the library serves.



*Pan De Libros* Pan De Libros is a library located in Anapra, Mexico. Anapra is a neighborhood of Juarez, Mexico, where the population is just over one million. They have about 1,700 books within their collection. Other than books, Pan De Libros has coloring books, table games, and places to sit and read. Pan De Libros offers a program that helps tutor young children outside of their classes. The librarian, Estela Huerta, noticed toddler aged children did not know how to read a face of a clock or how to read a calendar, so the library began to tutor children in these areas. Huerta said that the supplemental education the library provides for the children of this Mexican community is crucial. She mentioned that not every child learns at the same pace, and teachers are struggling to help all the children in the way that they learn best as individuals. The library provides an equalizer where they can come and do homework at their own speed. Huerta said that this helps their grades in school. Not only do the children have access to encyclopedias, they have a space to talk about what they are reading with their peers, and their comprehension improves:

Some libraries decide what books to order through conversations with patrons and getting a feel for interest. For Pan De Libros, the connection is a little more direct. In order to get books to the library, patrons fill out a slip for a book request that gets put on an Amazon Wishlist. Every book that is in the Pan De Libros library has been curated by donors ordering off the Amazon Wishlist.

Patrons will often request books that are health-related, especially the mothers and women who visit the library. Huerta said, "There are lots of diabetes books. A lot of adults don't have a computer at home and they can pick up a book about diabetes here. Diabetes and Alzheimers are something a lot of families in Mexico are facing, and they don't have any ideas how to treat it.



The library is educating our people more, because they can find information.” Diseases like diabetes can be difficult to manage, because as a result it comes with so many other complications such as blindness and kidney failure. If the public is not educated about what causes diabetes, how they can treat it, and what it looks like, it will be difficult for the epidemic to ease.

As for other popular requests, Huerta said the list includes cookbooks and recipes, other medical books that describe symptoms of serious diseases, books about collaborating with others, parenting and pregnancy books, and gardening. Huerta said educational books are extremely popular, and looking at the list, it is easy to see what Mexican people are interested in learning. Huerta said that they have a large section of novels, because that is what the young people love.

Huerta is currently hoping to expand programming and resources that Pan De Libros can offer, beyond books and tutoring for young children, especially by acquiring a projector. Huerta said a projector would help multiple needs at the library, from showing an entertaining movie to projecting information such as where the books are located, most popular titles, and what is coming to the library. Huerta also said if they had a projector, they could collaborate with others to give presentations on all the educational topics that people have questions about, such as birth care or how to navigate a first pregnancy.

Another need Huerta said she wishes to fill is having computers at the library. She specifically mentioned that it would be helpful for children and their homework, especially kids that don't have access to the computer or Internet at home.

***Belle Plaine Public Library*** The Belle Plaine Public Library is a library based in Belle Plaine,

Iowa, a town with a population just under 3,000. Kristi Sorensen, the Belle Plaine Library Director, said regarding resources, that the library has books for all ages and genres, and computers and laptops for public use. Sorensen also mentioned there is a color copy and fax machine, movies and books on CD. Additionally, puzzles can be checked out. In order to keep in touch with what resources the community needs, Sorensen said that their library offered a survey for patrons to fill out to learn what the patrons wanted and made changes accordingly. She said:

We have changed our hours to include more morning hours as that was a request that was made. We also started offering Wi-Fi as it was becoming more common. We take suggestions from our patrons of materials they would like to see us have, as well as programs they would enjoy. We work to listen to our patrons and provide the services they want. We are a smaller, rural community, so services like a color copy machine and a fax machine comes in handy, rather than traveling to a larger community. We also have interlibrary loan, where we can get books from other libraries for our patron. Obviously, we can't carry all the books, so this is a nice way to help them find the resources they want.

According to Sorensen, books, computers, and DVDs are the most popular resources that the patrons use at the Belle Plaine Library.

***Mid-Continent Public Library*** The Mid-Continent Public Library (MCPL) system is a system of libraries that is very near and dear to my heart. It is the public library system that I grew up in, and where I grew my love for libraries. There are 31 MCPL locations around the greater area of



Kansas City, Missouri. Each of the locations looks a little different, because the libraries strive to serve the specific community. I spoke to Vicky Baker and Christen Stein, associate directors of public service. Between them, they oversee 26 out of the 31 libraries in the Mid-Continent Public Library system. "We do a lot of different things as most libraries do. We have four databases, a lot of books, a lot of e-books and different types of programming." They have programs that help start or grow or support a small local business. In 2016, over 40 business in the area said they were impacted by those services. Early literacy is a huge goal for the MCPL libraries, especially because the current mayor of Kansas City, Sly James, is known for his initiatives focusing on getting 3<sup>rd</sup> graders at an appropriate grade level of literacy. Baker and Stein said because of this, that they do a lot of outreach to daycares, and promote a phone application that families can use to develop skills like reading and writing. Another resource is the "reading rocket," a trailer style bookmobile that goes out into low-income areas. There are educational games and story time on the trailer and off the trailer, and an extending canopy. It travels in the summer during "off times" such as evenings.

An initiative that is only a few months old focuses on reading boosters at a few of the branches. On Saturday mornings, high school students involved with programs that require community service pair up with children that are not reading at grade level and the child reads to the teenagers. "In the first couple of weeks, they had four or five kids show up, and the next they had twelve," they said.

The MCPL also has a demographic that doesn't even set foot in the library. "We have an older audience and a books by mail audience. Kids [and senior citizens] that are home bound can call, and we can mail them material that they can read, preload a Kindle with titles, or mail out audio books," they said. The librarians pointed out that technology help is a big draw to the



library. They said:

Things like Geek Squad are more for hardware issues not software issues. They don't teach you how to do the programs or Facebook. Someone was saying the other day, 'I want to take pictures on my phone and get them on my Facebook account.' For someone who doesn't know how to do that, it's a mystery. We have support for people trying to create resumes, in some cases they don't know how to fill out an application and use a mouse. We connect them and support them. At a lot of our branches, we have literacy level issues. They can't read their screens. We help with translation for some people. Without giving them the answer, we help them.

"Old fashion reference service is mostly gone," they said, giving evidence that libraries are changing rather than dying. "One of the [reference] librarians has become an business information librarian. They are focused on that particular kind of education and helping people with that."

As previously stated, adapting resources to the community is different for each of the communities. "We are really looking at each community individually, and address them in the most library appropriate way. The libraries are divided by looking at different factors. We compare the risk factors, like what percentage of the community speaks English or is at the poverty level," the librarians said. They compare that to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading levels from MAP, a standardized test Missouri schools administer. The lower the scores are, the higher the area is at risk. Then they ask questions like, "Is this library in a community where people don't have Internet at their home? Is the library their only sources of Internet?" The librarians mentioned to



me that there are some patrons that live in areas that still have dial up. A resource like library Wi-Fi is incredibly helpful in those areas, if only for the sake of speed of which they can use the service.

Right now, the MCPL is looking to expand their programming on career guidance, based on what they have been hearing from patrons and staff. "Meaning actually helping them, not just navigating applications, but helping them get a job," they said. Another need is expanding their English as a Second Language programming. "Something I just heard is that two different branches need ESL. The school districts offer classes for adults but there's over a year waiting list. We don't have the training or staff to support to do that."

Another unexpected problem lately is homelessness. While urban branches would be unsurprised to see something like homelessness arise in their library, the librarians mentioned this has been happening at suburban branches that don't feel equipped to help with this kind of issue. They said:

We are trying to get bus service in suburban areas. [The Kansas City Public Library] has a social worker, and have meetings with the homeless population in the building and find out the need. They really need jobs. They don't want to sleep all day, but they need jobs that pay something. It can't be 8 dollars at McDonald's. It's not that they are doing anything inappropriate, they are just there all day.

Baker and Stein mentioned they are actively looking for ways for their suburban branches to be assisting the consistently growing homeless population.

As for the most popular resource used by patrons, Baker and Stein said that it might be

surprising that while e-books have become popular, print books are still the most popular product. Baker and Stein also mentioned that the resource used most by the patrons is simply the physical space of the library. "It's somewhere they can see other people, hang out at big tables. Everyone has a 'third place.' After your home, your work or school, you have a 'third place.' For some people it's a bar. For some people, it's us."

***Muncie Public Library*** The Muncie Public Library is a system of libraries that serve the city of Muncie, Indiana. I was able to sit down with three librarians from Muncie Public Libraries Akilah Nosakhere, the director, Beth Kroehler, Assistant Director, and Mary Lou Gentis of the Maring-Hunt Building.

The Muncie Public Library has: books, DVDs, CDs, books on CD, music, e-resources like databases, and a streaming movie service similar to Netflix. They have programming targeted towards adults and youth, both entertaining and informational. They loan hotspots for Wi-Fi that patrons can check out for two weeks. The buildings have free Wi-Fi and computers. The librarians told me some programming is traditional, like story times, but there is a huge push for digital programming for teaching children and adults skills on the computer. For this, they have maker spaces, and utilize a program called Digital Climbers, for ages 8 and up. In Digital Climbers, users can pick tasks that teach them new technology skills. When they complete it, their digital avatar climbs up the mountain.

The Muncie Public Library also has after-school tutoring programs and public meeting rooms that nonprofit organizations can use for free. There is a community garden. The library also offers services like tax preparation and help, as well as free legal aid.

"We react to our own community. What are people checking out? What databases and



reports are they using? What Westerns are they reading? Are they popular? How do we grow a collection? Our physical resources, our e-resources, how are they doing? We have committees that review and do those kinds of stats,” said Gentis.

Nosakhere is convinced adapting to the community is something that every single library should be doing. “The principles of librarianship are to inform the public, the education of the public man. That’s been our mission from the beginning, back in the Carnegie days. As the public changes, we have to change with them. The seniors, the children, the youth, we put our finger on the pulse,” she said. She said that diving deep into the community’s history is something that is desired and needed in Muncie. “Genealogy provides local history. We store and preserve, digitizing all the records.” Genealogy is one of the most popular resources the library provides, and gets requests around the world, mostly from people that say their family used to live in Muncie. “Muncie is Middletown,” Nosakhere reminded me. This is a reference to a popular study conducted in Muncie, Indiana. The study claimed that Muncie was the town that represented middle America the best. It’s a study that has and continues to create resonance among the community members.

As for what the Maring-Hunt branch feels like they need more of, the librarians spoke of more publicity. “We’d like to get the word out to people about the resources we have. We want to overcome that stereotype of the library’s ‘brand.’ A lot of people don’t know we get new books. More people used to read the paper and listen to local radio. We no longer have those placements, like we did in B.C. Before Computers,” they joked. Advertising with fliers and newspaper stuffers are no longer effective and the way people consume advertisements is different now. There’s been a larger push for the library to advertise via social media. The librarians said that if people knew everything the library could do for them, it would be a game

changer. They said:

We feel like we can fulfill more needs that people use us for. People need to be re-skilled.

We do tech well, train and teach well, and are interacting with them everyday. We could work with retraining on that level. Skills like being punctual, what to wear for interviews, job etiquette. Some people have never been taught how to work or how to be at work.

The main complaint from businesses was there were no soft skills. It's hard to meet those needs if people don't see themselves needing it.

Rather than seeing things that their libraries need more of, the librarians thought they had a lot of resources that could be used more.

A new project that has been making some progress this year is a project with the Muncie Community Schools in which both the libraries and the schools work with one database. School libraries show up on the catalog, and kids and teachers are all given a library card that works in their school and the public library. Previously, the communication between the public schools was poor, and each school didn't know what books or resources every school had. Because of this project, schools and libraries are able to see what everyone has. This makes things like interlibrary loans possible, or a teacher could gather every copy of a single title from across town if they wanted to do a group read. This project is underway right now, and as of October of 2016, all the elementary schools are up, and it is progressing quickly.

Another new project gets staff members out of the library and into the community.

Kroehler said:



Some of our staff is doing early literacy. One woman walked the neighborhood and interacted with families and reached 14 people. She scheduled one on ones with preschool students, getting them ready to read and working with the parents. That program is almost a year old and it's starting to grow. The big push is getting kids ready by 5. If you don't get ahead of that brain development, you'll always be behind.

Early literacy can prove to be crucial for a child's development. If children are not learning to read at a certain pace as soon as they can, it can be very difficult for them to catch up when they start attending elementary school.

***Kansas City Public Library*** The Kansas City Public Library is a system of libraries that serves the city of Kansas City, Missouri. These branches are separate from the ones in the previous section of the Mid-Continent Library System. I spoke with Kim Gile, Community Reference Manager.

"Our resourcing runs the gamut. We have computers, printing, Wi-Fi at all locations. Copy and fax service. We have programming- everything from book clubs to computer classes to author visits and special events, and story times. We have local histories and special collections.

Genealogy for Kansas City," Gile said. "Every different kind of library has a different philosophy. Suburban libraries are completely different, with different patrons," she told me.

"We have a focus on digital literacy advocacy at the urban library. We are part of a coalition composed of all kinds of organizations across KC, like schools, and hospitals. We are on the front lines on national level for access tech for people." Kansas City had the special honor of being the first to use Google Fiber, a gigabit internet service, offering a faster connection,



downloading, and uploading than almost any other service on the market. Gile told me that the library is partnering with Google to bridge the digital divide in the city, reaching to the parts that might not have access to digital resources. "You need technology and skills to participate in society, you can't do anything without connectivity. We are leader in that, a lighthouse in that. That's our claim to fame," she said.

"We are doing a good job with the finite resources that we have. When the economy tanked, library resources got cut across the country. We are doing more with less. We are in a position where we are just scratching the surface with literacy and the digital divide, to create real change," said Gile. The library strives to be those game changers for their patrons, but they only go so far. She mentioned that in order to create positive community change, it is crucial to participate in local government and nonprofit organizations to help the library with things it cannot do itself. The more money and staff the library has, the more impactful programming is. The library strives for a holistic view of focusing on the community.

As far as the homeless population goes, the Kansas City Public Library currently feels more equipped to direct programming to that demographic than the Mid-Continent. "We've really stepped up homeless patrons and advocating for resources for them. We have a program called Coffee and Conversations. We invite the homeless community into the library and give them coffee, pastries, crafts, and there's always someone from the community as a resource. A few weeks ago, Goodwill came in and did a presentation." Gile says that this is a good relationship because companies can come recruit, but they also can come figure out how to change their business models and services. "No one gets judged," she said. "It's a really awesome program."

Currently, social service groups come into the library a few hours a day to assist with



patrons. Gile says if they could, they would love if those social service groups could be at the library all the time. "A social service librarian would be helpful and have a huge impact for patrons that come in every single day," said Gile.

***Queens Library*** The Queens Public Library serves Queens, New York City, the most ethnically diverse county in America. I spoke to Fred Gitner, Assistant Director of New Initiatives and Partnership Liaison of the New Americans Program. This program is specifically geared to the city's immigrant population. He said:

There are 62 locations in Queens that are library locations, including central libraries. We have seven adult learning centers, and two teen libraries, some libraries without books. We offer technology, programming, [or] a place to go after school. We provide resources, [and] groups where they can discuss various issues.

The Queens Library is in a special position because many of its patrons do not speak English, so the library has to adapt to its community in this way, ranging from brochures in different languages about general library services to explaining American library conduct that might differ from other cultures. Gitner said this comes with specific challenges:

We have a new Arabic speaking population, and the mothers don't speak any English at all. They didn't understand how children should conduct themselves in children's room. If they don't pick up their children by 6pm, we are forced to call the police. We have a sign that says, 'do you know where your children are?' We just updated it to Arabic so

parents could read and understand. We aren't just calling the police because we want to.

The library keeps a very close eye on what languages are being spoken in the community so that they can constantly update their collections. This way they can put out general brochures with information, such as where the collections are located, in major languages. Right now the top five most popular languages are Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Bengali, and Russian.

The library offers several cultural programs and celebrates various festivals. Gitner said:

We just changed our Lunar New Year celebration to include Koreans. Recently the Japanese just celebrated, so we tried to incorporate that as well. Other Eastern Asians don't celebrate at the same time. There's a Tibetan organization whose New Year is at the end of February. We observe Hispanic Heritage Month, Asian Pacific Heritage Month, a few years ago we did Ramadan. We've got Pakistani, Afghan, Bangladeshi, and Turkish celebrations rotating all of the time.

Gitner said that cultural programs include music, dance, theater, storytelling, crafts, and more. The library is always trying to balance between attracting new communities that are just moving into Queens and as the population that has been in Queens for years.

The New Americans program is in charge of purchasing, developing, consolidating, and distributing collections to the correct communities. It updates reports, maps out library services, and creates defined boundaries. This program does this to can get statistics on top languages and services in order to make changes and updates. They offer English as a Second Language classes and English conversation groups led by volunteer facilitators in a handful of branches. About



twelve or thirteen branches would like to see themselves doing more language based classes, but navigating budget cuts over the past few years has made it a struggle to keep up with so much demand.

Compared to other communities that grow steadily or even very slowly, the Queens Library must keep up with the rapid changes in its community. As far as expanding resources and programming, Gitner said that there are several things that the Queens Library would love to do:

One thing that would be expanded is translation or interpretation services. We need legal assistance to citizenship, [and] a partnership with lawyers and the mayor. Four days a week we offer one on one appointments [for legal assistance] meeting with people, and we are expanding that to a lawyer for general questions. We have the resources hot tip list, but it's good for the library and community if there's a rotating lawyer for general questions at select libraries.

More than any other library that I interviewed, the Queens Library is directly impacted by the changes being made by our current political administration. Gitner spoke candidly on this:

I was reading today about people being pulled out of school, afraid of going to story time at the library and to the doctor. We had a morning we called 'Queens Library Supports Immigrants,' and we had a couple of workshops. Almost 200 people showed up, including politicians. We campaign that immigrants can come and get the information they need, no matter what it might be. For the most part, libraries have the trust of people.

We don't ask questions when you come in the door.

Gitner spoke about how recent executive orders and rhetoric in the current political administration have affected the Queens Library, and what their role has been in making the library a safe place for everyone. He said:

I'm a member of the Queens Borough Immigration Task Force, that meets once a month and brings in speakers. Before this latest executive order, we had a panel of immigration lawyers and all the different agencies responding questions. There are limitations about where [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] can round up people. They can't go into schools and churches, but libraries weren't mentioned. So it's still not clear. Do they have to have a warrant? That's still trying to be figured out. We want to inform people as much as possible.

Gitner also talked about how cultural stigmas about libraries in other countries will often come over with immigrants:

We offer such a variety of programming in different languages and that attracts people, but some people are concerned about even coming to the library. Initially they come from countries that aren't familiar with public libraries, so when they come here they think that it's just another government building. It's the teachers who tell the kids to come to the library. We have "Know Your Rights" workshops in English and Spanish and Mandarin.



Gitner talked about how the mayor commissioned human rights workshops, and that has manifested in different responses over the years. After the Haitian earthquake in 2010, the library was able to respond. He said:

After the Haitian earthquake, those immigrants were granted protected status for a work permit so they could send money back to Haiti. They were asking several organizations things like, 'what is TPS [Temporary Protected Services]? Is it good for me to apply? What are the benefits? Several of those workshops were catered to the Haitian communities, and delivered in Haitian creole. We respond to needs, and to provide informational workshops we work with organizations to ask current needs. We have agencies contacting us, with things like, we have this need to talk about teen dating in Haitian community, and so we organize.

Because the immigrant population is so large, Gitner talked about the benefit of being open to different kinds of identifications, such as IDNYC. IDNYC is a free identification card for any resident of New York City. The resident only needs an address and a photo. Residents can use it to get into museums and their children's school, but the police accept it as well. It is an extremely popular service, as its cardholder count just reached one million. Gitner said that it can also be used as a library card at any branch, either to link to a library card or to create a new account.

Even though times have been a little rocky recently as the Queen's library seeks to better serve its immigrant patrons, 2017 is a special year for them.

"We got our first comprehensive immigrant grant in 1977, so we are celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup>



anniversary,” said Gitner.

### **3. Population/Demographics**

This section will be a short examination of the types of patrons the librarians described coming through their library doors. They were asked to describe their populations and demographics. Before I examine impact, I wanted to describe who is and who is not using these resources.

The Pew Research Center included people who have never been to the library and their attitudes toward it in their demographics. The 2016 study says:

Those who have never been to a public library are more likely to be male (24% have never been to a library), ages 65 and older (26%), Hispanic (32%), black (28%), high school graduates or less (29%), or living in households earning less than \$30,000 (27%).

At the same time, the data show there are members of other demographic groups that have had no direct experience with libraries, including: 11% of those with college degrees and 12% of those in households earning \$75,000 or more. Additionally, one-in-six parents of minor children (17%) say they have never been to a public library.

As far as this particular demographics’ attitudes towards the library, “more than half (56%) of those who have never been to a library say that the closing of their local libraries would have a major impact on their communities.” The study also says that the people that use the library are more likely to say that they use the library to find trustworthy information and



resources. Only 29% percent of people who have never been to the library would say that the library could help them find resources that they can trust.

***Pan De Libros*** Pan De Libros has found that their demographic is lopsided regarding gender, and this is probably because of the stigma attached to reading. "Our patrons are women, youth, and children. We don't have many men." Huerta said there is a macho stereotype that prevents men from coming to the library. "To come to the library and sit down is not a man thing. There is a misunderstanding as to what the library is. Women are the ones who come most," said Huerta.

***Belle Plaine Public Library*** "We have a population just under 3,000, and it is predominately white. Because of this, we do not carry a lot of materials for specific demographics/sub populations," said Sorensen.

***Mid-Continent Public Library*** In response to this question, Stein talked about how a few librarians did an experiment at the branches in which they sat and watched who came into the library. She said that she would normally answer that their demographic is older white females and young moms with children, but after observing, they are seeing some change. She said, "I was surprised. There were more men, and more young people than I anticipated. There was higher diversity at more urban branches. There were more Latino patrons but not a significant increase. There's Latinos out in the community, but not coming in to the library. But statistically, still middle aged white females."

***Muncie Public Library*** The librarians at the Muncie Public Library feel that their demographics

are diverse. They said:

We have youth, young adults, teens, elderly, poverty line, [and] professional. Some people come in for computers, and some just want to talk to the lawyer but they don't even have a library card. Downstairs around the adult area, there's the same people sitting at the computers. The [reference] desk spends most of their time helping people on the computer. They ask questions like, 'how do I attach my resume to my email?'

The librarians said that the stack behind the computers is all of the adult fiction and nonfiction. 646 adult books were checked out last month, but the librarians joked that it doesn't seem like anyone ever goes back there.

"Those people are kind of invisible. The tech people are the needy ones, but the readers are independent. They look the book up, they get it, and they leave," said Gentis. Gentis said that it's not just the poor and employed who are interested in the library. Everyone is interested.

**Kansas City Public Library** Gile emphasized that each library has a bit of a different flavor because of its location. She said:

We have 10 locations. Each location is its own little niche. Our eastern library has an international library, citizenship classes, foreign language and cultural library. The central location downtown, gets people on their lunch breaks, suits and ties getting coffee. The charter schools downtown use that branch as a school library. There are the homeless guys that spend all day with us. At the Bluford library, there's special



assistance on help and wellness, exercise programs.

**Queens Library** For the Queens Library, the collections are directly impacted by who is moving into the neighborhood, so the patrons and the collections rely on each other. “We have a chart of top 15 languages. Our major collections fall into the top 5 languages, south Asian languages, Bengali, and sub services in Hindi and Ordu, Asian creole or Polish, Nepali, [and] Tibetan,” said Gitner. “We’ve been apart of NYPL for about 20 years. We saw various periods of immigration laws in 1996. There were many people rushing to learn English. Queens is the most ethnically diverse county in the United States. There are 160 spoken languages and they are from 190 countries.”

#### **4. Financials and Budgeting**

Another way to show diversity within libraries is discussing how they acquire funding. While most public libraries use property taxes, that is only the surface of how libraries create a budget. The most influential factor of budgeting is the state in which the library is located.

**Pan De Libros** As previously mentioned in the resource section, Pan De Libros receives all of its resources through donation. It is possible for anyone to visit their Amazon Wishlist and make a contribution. Huerta told me that often, church groups or missionaries from America visit and support the library.

**Belle Plaine Public Library** Sorensen says that their funding comes from a little bit of everything. She said:



We purchase most of our materials, though maybe 1% can come from donation. We have city funding, county funding, and our library has a foundation that was set up to give us money each year. The city council gets to have say in our yearly budget, so that can affect what resources we have money for. In the 16 years I have been here, that has not been a problem. The library is seen as something the community really wants to have. It seems even if people do not use the library on a regular basis, they are glad we have one in our town. The library began having a foundation about 20 years ago, and that has helped add to our funding.

***Mid-Continent Public Library*** For the Mid-Continent, funding comes from personal property and real estate property taxes. The state of Missouri is structured this way, but it is different in other states. The librarians pointed out that in Kansas, libraries are funded through county funds. They felt that since Missouri uses property tax, they were more successful surviving the recession because they had their own funds, rather than having to fight other departments like the police department for budgeting. They said, however, there are other challenges to this funding. Cities have rights through the state laws, so legislation can potentially take away property taxes to give to a business.

Since taxes come in around December, the library funds come through in January and February. They gain a little state money and sometimes they get federal grants.

This last election cycle, Jackson County, Missouri voted yes for "Prop. L," a raise in property tax for a massive renovation for every single branch in the Mid-Continent system.

Baker and Stein expressed their excitement over "Prop. L" passing:



We are thrilled about 'Prop. L.' We had gotten to a point at the end of the recession where we ended up having to trade staff and not refill. The branches were bleeding from trying to fulfill all the things we've asked of them without outreach. We are really excited about building modification. Most of these buildings were built in 1980's. They are designed for a 1980's library. Libraries have changed a lot, and they are struggling to adapt. Prop. L is an update to a 21<sup>st</sup> library. Just looking at the electricity, we need to increase number of boxes we have. Everyone has 14 things to plug in. We are very excited about it. We are going out to talk to our staff about hours that might change, what they think that they need or services or organizations that they partner with.

"Prop. L" will definitely give an opportunity for some huge changes to be made within the Mid-Continent system.

***Muncie Public Library*** The state of Indiana recently passed a law that capped property taxes. This proved to be a good thing for property owners, but not great for entities that use property tax in their budget. As a result, the library saw cuts in their budget and a shift in how they would have to plan for their financial year. Besides property taxes, the library also gets money from gifts, donations, and grants. The Muncie Public Libraries are currently working with the Muncie Community schools project. The goal of this project is for all Muncie schools and libraries will be operating on one database. This project is being made possible by a grant from the Ball Brothers Foundation.

**Kansas City Public Library** Much like Sorensen of the Belle Plaine Public Library, Gile felt that funding came from several different places. She said:

Our funding is a mixture of everything. We are primarily funded through property taxes, and we seek out grants for special projects, and financial literacy training for putting together resources. We get private donations here from Kansas City. The Kauffmann family gives us money every three years, and that pays primarily for special events. [This contribution pays for] things like big name author visits and big art exhibitions.

A current annoyance is the tax increment fundraising that never goes into the library's budget. "If there's a developer investing in a property over something like the next ten years, they don't have to pay 100 % of property tax on new property. That's money that doesn't go back to schools and libraries."

**Queens Library** Gitner explained all the ways that the Queens Library funding looked a little different from other public libraries:

We are not a city agency, and we are not for profit, as well as all public libraries. 85% of what we get is city funding. There's a lump sum, [and] the library decides how it is going to be spent. Depending on the mayor initiative, 8% comes from state. In New York State, you get the collection money and materials for community library but not the central library. We get some other state funding for special services. New York State calls it 'coordinated outreach services,' services for adults, disabilities, incarcerated, the



homeless population. We have one in Queens, which includes immigrants, but since it's a larger program in Queens, it's not part of the state program. We serve that with city money. We get some federal funding, but mostly grants for special projects, fees from late books. We raise money through the Queens Library Foundation, and that's mostly for special projects and specialized staff, like people that are part time or helped people within the communities, or bilingual teens from the neighborhood being hired. We see government grants, state and federal, corporate foundations and individual giving. Language teaching is really asked for by customers. Grants have created the education center and Korean classes at the library. We had a grant from a private giver to teach language from Pakistan. Our program that teaches English is a mix of [money from] city, state, federal, and grants.

## 5. Impact

These are the stories, personal anecdotes, and in some cases, history of the libraries that each librarian shared with me about how they saw the impact of the library in their community.

***Pan De Libros*** Huerta was encouraged by her friend, Katie Schultz, to begin the library in Mexico.

"When Katie told me about the idea about building a library in Anapra, I didn't think it was going to be a good project because in our culture we don't read a lot, even at school. Schools don't use their libraries or check out books. It's nothing like the United States where librarians come and talk to you about books."

Huerta was convinced a library in Anapra would not work. Despite this, Katie kept

insisting. When the library first began, no one came. When Pan De Libros partnered with schools in the area, they began to see traffic. They created a sponsorship program that required students to come into the library one hour per week.

“There were no spaces where the kids could read, and it’s important for education for kids to read. Kindergartners would come as a field trip and the teachers would read to them, and then there was games and coloring after. Kids liked that,” said Huerta.

After the popularity of the library grew among children, families began to come. Huerta noticed that adults would pick up books, thumb through the pages, and then put them back down. After observing this for a while, Huerta asked why they did this. They told her that they did not even know what to look for in a book. “They’ve never had a library before, and now they are finally interested,” she said. The adults that liked to read began to recommend books to one another, and the younger children would recommend things to each other as well. Huerta said that the youth hearing about books online and recommending them to other youth was beneficial, because Huerta was not even sure what to recommend. After three years, the library is going strong, especially on Saturdays. On the weekend, Pan De Libros sees about 60-70 patrons. Along with lots of traffic from locals in the community, teachers will come to the library to tutor and read to children. This has had a direct impact on children’s grades.

“The kids were having problems at school, and the teachers would write notes about reading progress and spelling progress, so this has helped so much with both,” said Huerta. She continued:

Books are really important and bring change and we are seeing that with the library.

When I hear the ladies talk about the library and they say they didn’t like the library



because 'I didn't want to sit down and read a book, but now that I've started, I want to read a book and read the next one and the next one. It just took me time to figure it out.

Thank you for [continuing to] ask me to come to the library because now I love it.'

There's one woman who told me she doesn't like to check out the books because if she takes the book home, she gets busy with work and kids and she doesn't have to

time to read at home. So time at the library is time for *her*. She doesn't have to do

anything else. She can take the time for herself. She says, 'It's my time and I enjoy it.

Once I finish a book, I can go onto the next.' There's another woman who told me that,

'Once the library started, I didn't know how to read. I had a lot of problems with kid's tales.' And now she comes to read books. It takes time, but now she can read a novel. I

told her, 'No one's going to say anything just because you're reading a kid's tale.' But

now she reads novels, and asks about books that are checked out that she wants to read.

We've seen a lot of progress. There's been very positive change. We are still working,

and there is still a lot to do. Libraries are still not very common, and we are still looking at ideas to encourage reading.

Huerta said the popularity of the library is growing, but the library has not slowed down on outreach. They pass out fliers at school and around the community, trying to get people interested. Even though the library is more popular now, Pan De Libros continues to think through strategies that will get more people to come to the library.

Huerta admitted that when the library first began, she did not know what she was doing. She was not sure how to classify books or how to organize them. She did know that there was an opportunity to educate kids, and that the library is a space that could accomplish this. "In 3 years,



we have done a lot, we've run a big road, and we have a lot more to do. We need all the ideas and suggestions we can get to keep working on it."

***Belle Plaine Public Library*** Even though Belle Plaine is one of the smallest libraries in my research, it still has made ripple effects throughout the whole community. Sorensen told me:

We have many people who come here to use our computers when they are here visiting family. [We get many] people who come to visit grandma or grandpa, and they don't have Internet. We had a gentleman send us a dozen roses once. We had helped him do a resume, apply online for a job, and he got it! Our town is small, and many people know 'everyone in town.' It is fun when people run into each other when they are here, and can stand and visit. We may also be the 'listening ear' for the widow, single person, or anyone that just wants to have conversation. They come to get a book, but they appreciate having another person to talk to. A lot of the things that go on aren't just about the resources of movies, books and such, but that people come together to share stories. Our programs bring in adults who enjoy a variety of crafts or speakers and the fellowship of visiting with others. We have a book club that has gone on for years, and have 14-20 people on a regular basis. We have a used book sale 2 times a year as a fundraiser. I am always surprised by how much money is given for purchasing used books. The library is well loved in this community!

***Muncie Public Library*** Nosakhere talked about the ways partnering with the university next door impacts the community. The Muncie Public Library also works alongside Minnetrista, a



gathering place in the Muncie community. She said:

Ball State University collects local history, a huge history, along with Minnetrista and the Historical Society Board. We all communicate and have some of the same stuff, but also have some speciality stuff. But we know what the speciality stuff is, rather than competing. The local library has a relationship with different department and the library, but not necessarily the Bracken library [the main campus library]. They serve the academic needs for students, but the historical stuff is our common ground. No group can do it all. Who cares about the credit and who puts their names on things? It's changing to more of a group effort. There are only so many hours in the day. We have immersive learning projects, individual students do projects with us.

Despite some partnerships, the Muncie Public Library system is completely independent from the university, and the impact is too. The librarians told me:

We had a gal do her recording for her singing contest, and the judges rejected it because it was too good for the state fair because [the recording] was too professional. We've had a guy at Connection Corner who wanted to make a sound recording to do something to develop his business. A 90 year-old woman, not from the area, was looking for her previous husband's Social Security. She had money due, and we were able to get her documentation. We solve things, we save people's money. We know we are helping individuals, sometimes stupendously, but we don't know when that happens. People don't always come back and tell us. There might be a kid that's coming in here regularly,



and you mean everything to him. And you'll never know which kid it is. We don't always know the full story. It goes to show that we are meeting their needs. Sometimes patrons take it for granted, that we will always be here, so we are working on accountability. We are in flux because of the people who don't use social media but use the library frequently. The library community is such a wide group, sometimes word of mouth is the only thing we have. There's no social media or no newspaper. Information needs vary from the youngest to the oldest in lots of different ways.

Nosakhere wanted to make clear that the library only runs because of an incredibly talented and committed staff. She said:

We've got a staff who is committed and in tune with needs of the community. Sometimes the staff forgets about their own needs. They are a community of people who are unique. People who work in libraries are unique people and really committed. They know we focus on people, rather than just a building full of stuff or a building of the hottest tech. Stuff is no good if you don't know where it is. What good is the hottest tech to the community without the people who help you learn how to use it? Librarians are it. The heart of the library is the staff.

Nosakhere said that it is important that we all lean on each other. "There are people who don't have library degrees who are still providing services through the libraries. There's a learning curve. One person can't know everything. There are so many segments of specialization."



**Mid-Continent Public Library** The Mid-Continent told me a few stories that showed how a big part of a librarian's job is to connect patrons with resources they did not know existed.

A staff member noticed a kid that was about 19 or 20 that hung out all day everyday on his phone. The staff member had a conversation with him, and realized he was trying to apply for jobs on his phone. They helped him get an account, and they got him on a computer to help apply for jobs.

The librarian said that he was able to get a job because he was able to apply from the library computers. When he got the job, he came back to the library and paid all the fines he had acquired on his account in one visit.

They said another woman kept applying to jobs but had some issues with her resume. During a tech help session, a librarian suggested that the patron use a service called "tudor.com" that will give suggestions on a resume. The woman worked with "tudor.com" and came back to the library. She said that she really wanted to let the librarians know that not only did she get an interview and a job, but her employers had told her that her resume was the best they had ever seen. The librarians said they love this story because it really exemplifies that when the library pulls all its resources together, it makes for a really good story.

Baker and Stein talked about how each branch does a lot of the same things, but the managers have become really good at their jobs and recognizing what resources they need more or less of. Story times are important in urban branches, but outreach might come first. Without initial outreach, children do not come to the library. "The value of that first step is important in



those libraries. One branch that's very suburban and very busy, can't *not* have story times. They would be fine if they didn't have them, but their parents really want it," Baker and Stein said. The librarians talked about how libraries have a hierarchy of needs. Once they know that patrons have access to the library, they can start discussing what those patrons want and need. For example, "There's a suburban branch that is looking at their level of creative expression, so they need DIY craft and art programs." Not every library has the funding, resources, or population to have this kind of need.

For the Mid-Continent, it is not just their in-house library resources that are making an impact. They said:

We've been telling this for about a year or two, but, one of our school districts had a 'one to one' program, where every kid has a device. A teacher called us and said one of her students moved up four reading levels in one quarter. She was like, 'Why now? Why all of a sudden? We want to replicate this!' When the kid was reached out to, she said 'My mom works two jobs and can't get me to the library, and now this device lets me have books and I can read all the time.

A child was able to use up and coming digital resources from the library to rapidly improve her reading and comprehension skills.

Because of "Prop L," Baker and Stein realize that the next few years at the Mid-Continent are going to see some internal dynamic changes as well as physical. Some branches are going to be closed while renovations are being completed, causing a shift in staffs and responsibilities. While that can cause a strain, Baker and Stein expressed that they were excited



about how things will come together, and that “Prop L” will really push the Mid-Continent in a favorable direction to better serve the community. Between “Prop L” and what Baker and Stein have seen, they feel like the library is still a well-loved resource within the community, and said:

We, as an organization, have made an effort to adapt as the world changes. How libraries remain relevant and are important. We have to, so future generations see the importance of libraries. We always get the question, ‘Why are libraries still a thing?’ ‘Why do you need a degree, how many classes does it take to learn to shush people?’ Well, the number of visitors that came through our door would fill Kauffman Stadium 62 times. That’s just the Mid-Continent Public Library in 1 year. People are still coming to the library.

***Kansas City Public Library*** Gile said that often, urban public libraries are working and making impact on two different levels. “There’s the front line staff, they are building relationships with patrons and knowing their story. The other aspect is at 5000 feet, participating in the community on a functional level, through coalitions and committee work, with other organizations working towards the same thing.” Gile said that the urban public library position is unique from other kinds of public libraries, and her experiences working in a suburban branch and an urban branch are very different in ways that she didn’t expect.

Gile said that libraries in suburban areas are “hold-driven,” meaning that patrons know what they want to check out, so they request directly from the library. The library then puts the material aside so patrons can come to the library and pick it up. But Gile said that the urban libraries like Kansas City Public Library differ because more people are without digital literacy skills.

“It’s a different experience I was not expecting to have and there are so many different kinds of public libraries that are out there. It’s staggering. You come with the assumptions. ‘How I use the library is how everyone use the library.’ That’s not the case. That has ripple effects on our materials. What should we order? Should we have a card catalog? How do people get their materials? It changes it across the board,” said Gile.

**Queens Library** Gitner said that even though this story happened a few years ago, librarians still liked to tell it. The Queens Library has had a partnership with a couple hospitals in the area, and through this partnership, they were able to bring in doctors that speak different languages on health issues. Gitner pointed out that on certain topics such as medical or legal advice, people like to hear information in their first language. Gitner said:

We found a particular impact when we had a lecture on Spanish speakers and diabetes.

This doctor came to give the lecture and a nurse came to do a test on people who wanted to be tested on site. Ten people got tested, and there were two people in concern. One was a mother of someone who just immigrated from a Latin country to Queens. She was given an appointment right on site. She had absolutely no idea. There was another gentleman who was at risk, and he was also completely unaware. We always say libraries save lives, and this is a good demonstration.

Gitner emphasized the importance of libraries being familiar with their social services through the American Library Association, and getting information about who is in their community. He stressed that it is critical to know what services and collections are being used,



and who is using them. He said:

We just want to be proactive in trying to serve the entire community. Immigrants pay taxes. Whether they are undocumented or documented, they still pay taxes. They should be getting appropriate services. Not special services, appropriate services. Libraries need to maintain their position in the community as their place where people want to go. They need to keep up with use of technology.

Gitner mentioned that an impactful librarian wears a lot of hats. "There's this debate, librarians are asking themselves on whether I'm a librarian or a social worker. You don't need to be a social worker. We now have those on staff. We keep looking for new ways to serve. We're always attending conferences, asking what are other libraries doing, and coming back with ideas."

## **6. Conclusion**

By examining the different populations, funding, and resources it's clear to me that libraries are succeeding in keeping a close relationship with their communities. This is exemplified in the diversity of all the libraries I interviewed. If every community had the same needs, then every library would look exactly the same. Yet every library is unique, much like the patrons that walk through the door. Librarians have an extensive understanding of when their community changes, their library must be updated as well. This could mean extending the services to be more inclusive of the homeless population, or paying attention to what immigrant populations are moving into the neighborhood. Even when populations are more static, like those



of the Muncie Public Library and the Belle Plaine library, the librarians are very aware of how the needs of those populations are still changing, and how they need to be updating each of their resources in order to accommodate their patrons.

Some libraries are not as equipped to help their communities in advanced ways, but they are still each serving in any capacity they can. For example, both Huerta and Gitner told me that diabetes is a huge problem in the Spanish-speaking community. While discussing the impact of this need in their libraries, Huerta told me they reach this need by requesting books about health and diabetes to be donated to their library. This makes a positive change when mothers come into the library and are able to educate themselves about the disease, and are able to recognize symptoms or how to have better homecare regarding diabetes. The Queens Library has the ability to go a few steps further, by being able to have medical professionals come into the library to administer tests to patrons. When they were able to give a lecture in Spanish, and give Spanish-speaking patrons a test for diabetes, they literally saved lives. Rural Mexico and urban Queens have the same need when it comes to a demographic of the patrons, and they are both using their means and resources to make the maximum impact that they can.

This is also exemplified in the Kansas City and Greater Kansas City Area. Gile spoke to me about the homeless population, and how the library was able to jump in and start helping that population by giving them food and resources. The Mid-Continent mentioned that the homeless population in those branches are just now becoming a potential problem, and the Mid-Continent is in the beginning stages of outlining solutions for that demographic. This is another example of two different libraries that have the same need, but because of their location and current resources, they are handling it in different ways.

Yet another example of how libraries are adapting to their communities is the way that



different libraries feel like they need to update their promotion. Pan De Libros told me that they are still making extensive outreach into the community because they are trying to overhaul a cultural stigma against libraries in their country. The Muncie Public Library feels like they need to update their promotions because they are worried their community is not aware that the library has more than just books. They also expressed that even though their population is a little older, they feel the need to start getting on social media, because ads in the newspaper are no longer lucrative. Both libraries are looking for new ways to reach their community, but it is for different reasons.

Some things were the same across the board. Almost every library told me that their books are their most popular resources, and if they have computers, that is the other most popular resource. I think this is really telling, because it proves that people are still coming to the library for what people see as its “original purpose.” What people perceive is becoming irrelevant about the library, is not actually irrelevant at all. I also think that it’s telling that the other well-used resource is the computer access, because a library’s true original purpose is access to free information. Computers are the current example of that. For some people, the library is their sole provider of Wi-Fi. They would not have it otherwise. Books used to be the main portal to education and information that helped people get ahead, but now Wi-Fi is needed to get a job and to do research.

There are people who come to the library to use the Wi-Fi to watch their favorite TV shows. While some people may argue that entertainment is frivolous, I want to challenge that. Surely one can see a value of one mother from Pan De Libros declining to check out a book so she could enjoy it solely at the library. I find a similar motive in those who come to the library to surf the Internet or to watch videos. It is impactful to see people get jobs because of their access

to library computers, but I argue that it's just as impactful for those who find a sacred space in enjoying entertainment at the library.

I love that Gitner spoke about the Haitian population that uses the Queens Library. When the earthquake happened, the library was able to help Haitian Americans navigate some really difficult questions and resources, and they were able to do it in their own language. But he also talked about how they are so connected to agencies that are paying attention to the Haitian population in Queens, that they saw needs outside of the devastating earthquake, like teens and their dating problems. They were able to offer workshops about this. The ripple effects of problems in Haitian teen culture are not as obvious as earthquake relief. When the library's patrons have multitudes of needs with their community, then the library must have multitudes of resources.

As far as needs that people see in their community they feel their library should be serving, the Pew Research Center says, "Americans have a pretty clear message: help people learn digital skills without neglecting traditional functions." The study found that:

- 80% of those ages 16 and older say libraries should "definitely" offer programs to teach people, including kids and senior citizens, how to use digital tools like computers and smartphones. This is a similar pattern captured in a 2015 survey.
- 57% think libraries should "definitely" have more comfortable spaces for reading and working. This is down slightly from the 64% who said this in 2015.
- 50% believe libraries should "definitely" buy 3-D printers and other digital tools to allow people to use them. This compares with 45% who said this in 2015.



- 24% say libraries should “definitely” move some print books and stacks out of public locations in order to free up more space for such things as tech centers, reading rooms and meeting rooms. This is a decrease from the 30% who said this in 2015.

While all of them see money from property tax, some of the libraries have more committed donors than others, and even those donors are diverse in nature. Kansas City sees money from wealthy local families, and some programs at the Queens Library have some programs that are funded by a single person, while Pan De Libros gets single donations from all around the world. Indiana has a cap on their property tax, while the Kansas City area just voted to raise theirs.

Each population seems to be wildly different from each other. It seems like the more urban areas like Kansas City and Queens have more diverse groups of people coming into the library, while the other libraries are beginning to see spikes in populations as they try offering different kinds of resources. Some of them have more exclusive populations, especially smaller libraries like Belle Plaine and Pan De Libros. If we were to examine each of Muncie and Mid-Continent’s branches, their populations may vary depending on what part of the city they are located in.

Each library expressed the utmost importance of paying attention to their community and then deciding on resources, instead of the other way around. The librarians talked about how in order for the library to remain not only relevant, but functioning on a basic level, they must be in tune to what’s going in the community. Behind the books, Wi-Fi, and programming, there’s a staff busy at work making sure that these are actually the resources that people need, and they are all happy to do it. Each librarian that I talked to expressed so much enthusiasm for their job, and



they were ecstatic to talk to me about the library. Whenever I did interviews with multiple librarians, such as when I went to the Muncie Public Library or spoke on the phone with the Mid-Continent Librarians, they would egg each other on and remind each other of programming and talk over each other with energy and passion. Baker and Stein even paused for a moment, apologizing for talking so fast- they were just really excited to talk about their library.

The Pew Research Center asked their subjects in 2016 if they felt that the community would be impacted if the library closed, and 66% percent said this would have “a major impact on their communities as a whole.” The study says that:

On this question, there are several notable demographic differences. Among those most likely to say that a library closing would have a major impact on their communities: women (74%); those between the ages of 50 and 64 (73%); and college graduates (71%). Those least likely to report that a library closing would have any kind of impact on their communities: those without high school degrees (15% say a local library closing would have no impact on their communities); non-internet users (15%); and those in households earning less than \$30,000 (10%).” These numbers show that customers see the value in their local library, and they would feel like it would be a huge loss to lose something like it.

Why is the library still important? It remembers those society has left behind, like the homeless, immigrants, youth, the unemployed, women, the elderly, those without digital access, and more. It provides knowledge for the truth seeker, space for the community seeker, and leverage for those among us who want to self improve. As their role grows, libraries will adapt



and create stronger community hubs. Whatever the patrons put into the library, they will get more back out. The mission of the library hasn't changed: serve the needs of the public through access and service. Because of the close relationship the library has with its community, the methods of achieving this mission has changed. As long as libraries continue to keep its goals and its community in mind, they will always be relevant.

### Works Cited

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Huerta, Estela. Personal interview. Feb. 3, 2017.

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Wait!!!

ORIHELP

Fri 10/14/2016 10:44 AM

THESIS

To: Gillilan, Haley Hope <hhgillilan@bsu.edu>;

Importance: High

Haley,

I spoke with the director of the office and based on the information provided, this is research but not Human Subjects Research. Because you are focused on the libraries and how they have adapted and not on the people, you do not have to submit a protocol. We recommend that you still provide the participants with an informed consent so that they are aware of and understand the study components. We also recommend that if you change your mind about parts of the study and start asking personal questions about the participants that may be compared, that you bring your research back to us to look at.

That being said, I'm so sorry that I made you sit through my spiel and you don't need to do it. However, I hope that you learned something that may be useful in the future! AND, the good news is, you don't have to wait on us to get started!

To clarify, we recommend that you download and complete the informed consent form to give to participants before interviewing them, but you do not need to turn it in to us or do any of the other stuff we talked about. Again, sorry about that!

I wish you the best of luck with your project and you can still let us know if you have any questions!

Best,

Devan

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2000 W. University Ave  
Muncie, IN 47303  
765-285-5052  
orihelp@bsu.edu

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**From:** Gillilan, Haley Hope  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 13, 2016 4:45 PM  
**To:** ORIHELP  
**Subject:** Re: IRB Application

Thank you so much! I will try and swing by during that 8am-11am time frame tomorrow morning. Thank you.

**From:** ORIHELP  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 13, 2016 4:05:31 PM  
**To:** Gillilan, Haley Hope  
**Subject:** Re: IRB Application

Good Afternoon,

First, I am going to attach the IRBnet User Manual. It is an extremely helpful and easy guide to submitting your proposal on IRBnet. It should walk you through each step. However, we know that it can be an intimidating process and hard to know where to begin. If you would like to meet with one of the GAs here in the office, we would be glad to help. I will be in from 8am to 11am tomorrow if any time in there works. If not, we have walk-in office hours listed here: <http://cms.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/researchintegrity/educationandtraining/educationgateway/peer-mentoring-program>

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IRB Peer Mentoring Program - Ball State University

cms.bsu.edu

IRB Peer Mentoring Program. Our graduate assistants are offering one-on-one consultation regarding research proposals. Students are welcome to stop in with questions ...

If you would like to meet with us, please let us know what time is good for you, and if none of the times listed work, we would be glad to work with your schedule and get you in! Or if you just have questions that can be answered by phone or email, we can always work with that. Let us know what you think.

Best,

Devan

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**From:** Gillilan, Haley Hope  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 13, 2016 10:05:46 AM  
**To:** ORIHELP  
**Subject:** IRB Application

Hello! My name is Haley Gillilan and I'm working on my Honors Thesis this semester. I have completed CITI training and I'm seeking approval from the IRB. After I have completed training, where do my advisor go from here? I have tried to register my project but I'm confused about which documents to download and where I need to send them.

Haley Gillilan